

**Siegel, Mark**

**From:** Siegel, Mark  
**Sent:** Monday, July 27, 2009 1:51 PM  
**To:** 'karen.robbs@mail.house.gov'  
**Subject:** Washington Post Editorial in support of ROZs legislation.

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Karen, do you think Chris might be able to get Ben Cardin to send this around as a Dear Colleague to the Senate? Let me know. thanks .mark  
 Washington Post.

## Jobs for Our Allies

The goal of this trade promotion bill is too critical to fall victim to partisan opposition.

Monday, July 27, 2009

AFGHANISTAN IS facing its second presidential election since the United States and its allies liberated the country from Taliban rule. This crucial event, scheduled for Aug. 20, has placed new pressure on U.S. troops and their allies from Canada, Europe and Afghanistan itself. Intensified combat with resurgent Taliban units is reflected in the fact that more than 30 U.S. military personnel have been confirmed dead in Afghanistan since July 1, making this month the bloodiest for American forces since they began fighting there almost eight years ago. The United States has a vital interest in peace and democracy for the country that al-Qaeda once exploited as a haven.

Yet security in Afghanistan is not a matter of ballots and bullets alone. Nor can direct U.S. economic aid purchase it, though that will help. Afghanistan and next-door Pakistan, where the Taliban insurgency is taking shelter while turning against the Pakistani government, need trade as well as aid. Fortunately, there is a proposal, recently approved by the House of Representatives, to help jump-start exports and create much-needed jobs. The bipartisan bill, sponsored by Rep. Chris Van Hollen, a Montgomery County Democrat and member of the House leadership, would create "reconstruction opportunity zones" within both countries. Certain products, including some (not all) textiles produced in the zones, would be able to enter the United States duty free for 15 years.

A similar program for Jordan spawned thousands of light-manufacturing jobs. Any proposal to import more goods from low-wage countries is bound to arouse organized labor's suspicion, but Mr. Van Hollen has addressed that with provisions guaranteeing international monitoring of labor standards in the proposed Afghan and Pakistani zones.

The main obstacle to the bill now is in the Senate, where Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) is objecting. He doesn't oppose the opportunity zones in principle. He objects to the labor-protection provisions, partly because he fears that they will be so onerous as to deter investors, partly because he thinks that Democrats and their allies in labor are trying to set a precedent that would impinge on other free-trade pacts -- and partly because, as he put it recently, the House and the Obama administration are trying to "jam" the bill through the Senate despite his well-known concerns.

But if this bill was good enough for several of his Republican colleagues in the House, it should be at least close to good enough for Mr. Grassley. Neither Afghanistan nor Pakistan seems to object to the legislation's labor-standards provision. The senator needs to remember that the stakes for U.S. foreign policy in this region are especially high -- and to negotiate accordingly. If Mr. Grassley reaches out in good faith, then Mr. Van Hollen and his fellow Democrats must respond in kind. The goals of this legislation, which both sides share, are too important to sacrifice over a dispute like this.

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